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## Leading National Youth Researchers Strongly Endorse Giving 16, 17-Year-Old Citizens Right to Vote

*Research Supports Efforts to Lower Voting Age as a  
“Promising Strategy” to Move the Needle on Youth Voting  
Rates; Op-Ed Appearing in Politico Today*

Medford/Somerville, MA – The [Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement \(CIRCLE\)](http://CenterforInformationandResearchonCivicLearning&Engagement.com) – the preeminent, non-partisan research center on youth engagement based at Tufts University’s Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service – is expressing public support for initiatives to lower the voting age in local elections as a **“promising strategy to significantly move the needle on seemingly intractable youth voting rates.”**

[In a blog posted](#) on CIRCLE’s website, the leading national youth vote organization stated, **“CIRCLE strongly endorses these efforts – many of them led by students – to directly engage young people in civic and democratic life.”** CIRCLE’s recommendations are based on relevant research findings, including:

- Young people are knowledgeable enough to vote. A study found that 16-year-olds’ political knowledge [is about the same](#) as 21-year-olds’.
- [Voting is habitual](#), and norms related to political engagement in high school have a lasting impact. Young people [continue to have a higher turnout rate](#), even into their mid-30s, if they went to schools where a majority of students believe they should vote.
- Learning about voting in high school [predicts actual voting](#) once people reach age 18. The ability to cast a ballot while in school would, in turn, strengthen and underline the immediate relevance of civic education.

# POLITICO

CIRCLE’s director and Associate Dean of Tisch College, Peter Levine, also has authored an [op-ed in Politico](#) on the topic titled, “Why the Voting Age Should be 17”.

In the op-ed, Levine states lowering the voting age will be good for our democracy in three distinct ways:

**“First, it is a strategy for connecting civic learning in schools to an important act of citizenship: voting. Students can be taught about the process before they vote and can reflect on the experience in class.**

**“Second, it is a strategy for expanding the electorate over the long-term. The United States has one of the lowest turnout rates of any democracy in the world. Lowering the voting age in municipal elections won’t push us to the top, but it’s a step in the right direction.**

**“Finally, encouraging older adolescents to vote on local issues recognizes that they are deeply affected by public policy, and especially by schools, police and employment programs. We need their voice to make those policies and institutions better.**

**“After all, if the government affects you, you should get to vote.”**

For a comprehensive background document on youth voting, including youth voting rates, research on why youth voting matters, what effects youth vote turnout and a list of additional research on youth voting over the last decade, please visit CIRCLE’s [“Quick Facts on Youth Voting”](#)

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*CIRCLE ([www.civicyouth.org](http://www.civicyouth.org)) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University.*

*The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service (<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/>) is a national leader whose model and research are setting the standard for higher education’s role in civic engagement education. Serving every school of Tufts University, Tisch College creates an enduring culture that prepares students to be lifelong active citizens.*

*Tufts University (<http://www.tufts.edu/>), located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university’s schools is widely encouraged.*